



DECLARE INDEPENDENCE FROM UNSAFE FIREWORKS PRACTICES



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Editor's Note: Local city ordinances may ban the use of fireworks, including sparklers. Depending on weather conditions, local governments may also have restrictions in place for fireworks use. Wisconsin residents should pay attention to their local media outlets for any announcements.

MADISON – OOOH! AAAH! OHHH! It's fireworks season again. As Wisconsin residents gear up for the Fourth of July holiday, state officials ask that families not let dazzling displays get in the way of good safety practices when dealing with fireworks, especially in the presence of children.

"Children should enjoy the sights and sounds of a fireworks display from a safe distance," said Michelle Reinen, Director of Wisconsin's Bureau of Consumer Protection. "The handling and lighting of sparklers or fireworks should always be left to the adults."

According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), in 2014, eight Wisconsin residents were hospitalized and 71 visited emergency departments due to fireworks-related injuries. Children under the age of 15 made up 22% of these cases.

"Fireworks are fun, but they can be very dangerous if used incorrectly," said Karen McKeown, State Health Officer. "Each year, there are many serious injuries such as burns and vision or hearing loss. These injuries could have been prevented by proper and safe use of fireworks."

"Additionally, some people and pets are very sensitive to loud noises, so we ask that people be considerate of their neighbors and think before they use fireworks," said McKeown.

Wisconsin law regulates the use of fireworks. Fireworks such as roman candles, firecrackers, bottle rockets, mortars – anything that explodes or leaves the ground – can only be purchased and used with a permit issued by your local government.

Non-explosive devices such as sparklers and cones do not require a permit, but that does not mean they can be used safely by children. More than half of the nation's reported fireworks-related injuries are burns.

"Many parents think of sparklers as a safe toy, but a lit sparkler burns at temperatures of up to 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit and can cause third-degree burns," said McKeown.

There are a number of safe alternatives to fireworks that will keep children entertained over the holiday weekend. Consider stocking up on flashing LED lights or glow sticks, bracelets or necklaces. They stay cool to the touch, remain lit throughout the night and are available in a wide range of colors, keeping your children entertained a lot longer than a sparkler or a firework. As an added benefit, any of these items will help make a child visible to a driver if they are playing after nightfall.

(MORE)

If you plan to use fireworks, follow these tips to ensure a safe Fourth of July for your family:

- Never allow children to play with or ignite fireworks.
- Read and follow all warnings and instructions.
- A responsible adult should closely supervise all fireworks activities.
- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Light fireworks on a smooth, flat surface away from any buildings, flammable materials and dry leaves and grass.
- Light one item at a time and then move back quickly.
- Never carry fireworks in a pocket or light them in or near metal or glass containers.
- Keep a bucket of water or a hose handy in case of a malfunction or fire.
- **Always remember – if fireworks fizzle and don't ignite, douse them with water and do not relight them.**

Find additional information on fireworks safety on the Wisconsin Department of Health Services website:

<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/InjuryPrevention/Fireworks.htm>.

For consumer information, visit the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection on the web at datcp.wisconsin.gov, by e-mail at datcpHotline@wisconsin.gov, by phone at 1-800-422-7128, or on Facebook: www.facebook.com/wiconsumer.

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